

THE
EMANCIPATION
OF
WOMEN:

BY
J. GIBSON,
EDITOR OF THE "CAMBRIAN NEWS."

"O, my friends, there are resources in us on which we have not
drawn."—EMERSON.

PRICE ONE SHILLING.

ABERYSTWYTH
PRINTED AND PUBLISHED AT THE "CAMBRIAN NEWS" OFFICE

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*Wm. Johnson's
Temple*

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NOTE.

Readers of the following pages may object that due acknowledgment has not been made of the reforms achieved on behalf of women in recent years, and of the legal disabilities removed from them. The writer's main object is to show what still remains to be done, rather than to glory over what has already been accomplished by many workers in various spheres.

J. GIBSON.

ABERYSTWYTH.

CONTENTS.

	PAGE.
NOTE	3
CHAPTER I.	
Women's Present Position	5
CHAPTER II.	
The Assumed Inferiority of Women compared with Men	12
CHAPTER III.	
Perfect Legal Equality	20
CHAPTER IV.	
Two Standards of Purity	28
CHAPTER V.	
The Sphere of Women	35
CHAPTER VI.	
Women and Religion	41
CHAPTER VII.	
The Loss and Gain of Change	49
CHAPTER VIII.	
When the Change is Complete	56
CHAPTER IX.	
How Men are Interested	61
CHAPTER X.	
Conclusion	69

THE EMANCIPATION OF WOMEN.

CHAPTER I. WOMEN'S PRESENT POSITION.

Notwithstanding many recent and important changes in the direction of giving greater freedom and justice to women, the laws of this country still treat women as the inferiors of men—as mere slave stuff. It can never be said that the work of political and social reform is finished until women are not only politically enfranchised, but are able to take their seats in the House of Commons and to hold even the highest positions in governments, trades, and the professions. Every law which presses unduly upon women must be abolished or amended, and they must stand before the law the perfect equals of men. Until women are the legal equals of men it is impossible that they can be regarded by public opinion as men's equals, and

therefore the first duty of all self-respecting women is by every means in their power to assert their legal rights, and to protest emphatically against their legal wrongs and disabilities.

Women constitute at least half the inhabitants of this country, and yet they have no part either in making the laws or in administering them. The wonder is, therefore, not that the laws are one-sided and in favour of men, and are often administered to the injury and disadvantage of women, but that women can obtain any measure of justice whatever under a system that practically ignores their political existence, except when they have to pay taxes.

The Marriage Laws are unfair to women by treating them as inferiors, by asking them to honour and obey their husbands, and by merging their identity in their husband's identity. A woman loses her name by marriage. She also wears a ring as a sign that she belongs to somebody and therefore is not fair game for the seducer. Men do not wear an external sign that they are married, and yet it is as important that women should know that men are married as it is that men should know that women are married. Many timid reformers who desire the emancipation of women do not venture to ask for the emancipation of married women. Until marriage is a mutual contract between two perfectly equal individuals, reform in the marriage laws will

continue to be necessary. It is an easy matter to sneer at the claims of women in reference to marriage, but whatever degrades marriage, or brings disabilities upon women who marry, strikes at the roots of freedom. Marriage should confer honour and position upon women, to make up for that measure of personal freedom which women inevitably surrender who take upon themselves the serious duties and responsibilities of maternity. But, unfortunately, it is not yet deemed to be an important duty to bear children, and so marriage lowers women and makes them of no account in the State. Even those who strive for the removal of legal disabilities from women are not infrequently weak enough to say that women who are married may be left under their disabilities, simply because they are married!

The Divorce Laws are unfair to women by refusing them decrees for the dissolution of marriage on the ground of simple adultery, which is enough to enable men to obtain decrees. Women must prove cruelty or desertion, in addition to adultery, before they can obtain freedom from the marriage bond. This form of injustice is so glaring that it cannot long be retained on the Statute Book.

The Bastardy Laws are unfair to women in many ways, and are the cause of a good deal of that immorality which disgraces the higher classes of society. The Bastardy Laws are

specially framed in the interests of men and property, and against women. The woman is practically helpless, however scandalously she may have been deceived, and however complete the real marriage may have been that lacked nothing but legal sanction. The child born out of wedlock is named after the mother, and cannot inherit unless specially named in a will. The mother is an outcast, and it has even been questioned whether she has a legal right to the custody of her own offspring! She cannot sue for seduction or for any deception practised upon her, and the father of her child is at liberty to marry and to dispose of his property without regard to his illegitimate child or children. The Bastardy Laws are simply monuments of men's injustice to women. This is not, perhaps, the place to say how the shameful injustice done to women under the Bastardy Laws should be remedied, but it is quite obvious that there is injustice, and that when women are represented in Parliament those laws will be greatly altered.

The laws which regulate the Church of England are unfair to women, as under those laws women are excluded from holy orders, and from holding any position of power and influence in the Church.

The laws which regulate admission to the legal profession are unfair to women, who are excluded from both branches of the law, and of course are

not eligible to become either judges or magistrates, however qualified by wisdom, knowledge of law, and social position.

The Electoral Laws are unfair to women, who are not allowed to vote for members of Parliament. A good deal of intermittent effort is made to bring this phase of the disabilities which rest upon women under public notice, but the progress made is slight and will remain slight until women realize that the first step towards their full emancipation is to obtain the Parliamentary franchise, which will have to be wrested from men.

The laws which govern the ancient universities are unfair to women, although some grudging concessions have been made in recent years, and have been eagerly seized by women and turned by them to good account.

The laws which govern the great public services of the country are unfair to women, although here, again, a few small concessions have been made in the lower branches of some of the services, and have certainly not been abused.

The rules of many friendly societies, trades societies, and other public bodies and institutions are unfair to women, who are excluded from them simply on the ground of sex.

The laws which govern many public bodies, such as Town Councils, County Councils, and Local Boards are unfair to women, who are compelled to pay local taxation, although not entitled to take

part in the management of their own affairs, or to hold positions of honour.

Taxation without representation is often said to be tyranny, but many leading Liberals ignore their own principles when dealing with women, and argue that the taxation of women without representation is not tyranny, and women do not, as yet, raise effective protest.

The existence of all sorts of unjust and oppressive laws against women naturally gives rise to equally unjust and oppressive public opinion in reference to them beyond the narrow but important sphere of law. The consequence is that women are not free as men are free, even in those departments of life not controlled by statute law. There is a hard, narrow public opinion, and a still narrower and harder social rule which restrict the freedom of women and impose upon them all sorts of negations and abstinences not imposed upon men, who are the makers and administrators of law. Women are not now burnt at the stake as witches, but the spirit that condemned them as witches is still not far to seek, and finds expression in many acts of injustice, but mainly in an attitude of antagonism and mistrust.

It is not pretended that the foregoing pages exhaust the directions in which law, custom, and social usage are, at present, unfair to women. All that is sought is to make quite clear the indubitable fact that the admission of women to

the political franchise will not complete the work of her emancipation, but will be, rather, only the first step towards enabling her to work out her own political, social, commercial, and educational salvation by breaking down those barriers and restraints which men, through many ages, have built up around her on the pretext of defending and protecting her. Under this bondage she has become enfeebled and unambitious of freedom which is not always pleasanter than the gilded slavery in which, alas, she too often lives in ignoble contentment.



CHAPTER II.

THE ASSUMED INFERIORITY OF WOMEN COMPARED WITH MEN.

The assumed inferiority of women compared with men is based on certain physical and mental results of long-continued training and experience, and not on any known radical differences in the sexes. Woman has been so long enslaved that it is impossible to say what she would be if she had always been free, and if the most capable instead of the least capable had been bred from. It may be said generally that only those men have become fathers who were capable, the incapables being killed out in the struggle for existence. Those women, however, became mothers who attracted men by their beauty, or other qualities, amongst which physical and mental strength did not, as a rule, count.

That more boys are born than girls is one of the facts revealed by the census returns, but there are eight hundred thousand more women alive in this country than men. War, perilous occupations, vice, and reckless living weed out the weak and

otherwise imperfect men, while the weak and imperfect women are not only preserved, but many of them become mothers, and so assist in lowering the average vigour of human life. To kill out the feeble males and then to say that the females are not as strong as the males and ought not, therefore, to be entrusted with the same rights and privileges is absurd, but that is what is done in reference to women, and the reasoning is frequently assumed to be sound.

Women have rejoiced in their physical weakness. They have distorted their waists by lacing. They have crippled their feet by small boots, and have done what lay in their power to hinder the development of their hands by abstaining from manual labour. Women have not themselves been altogether to blame for the kind of life that left the body undeveloped and the mind untrained. Men were the culprits. They put women in a false position, and, until recently, it was the aim of parents, from the very birth of a female child, to unfit her for separate, independent existence. Her training was neglected, and the educational endowments, intended as much for her as for her brother, were even filched away from her. Her physical training was confined to a mincing walk, while her brother was allowed to run and jump and do whatever his natural instincts impelled him to do. He was a boy, and could romp. She was a girl, and must be proper!

The neglect of girls by their parents in regard to physical training, education, and the way they were prepared not to earn a living made them utterly dependent upon men for the means of subsistence. Marriage was almost their only vocation, and to this end they lived. For the daughters of labourers there was domestic service and work in factories, and for the daughters of artizans there was dressmaking and serving in shops, but almost all women looked to marriage for their final settlement in life. Very frequently marriage was nothing more than a settlement for the wife, the husband discovering that affection on her part had had nothing whatever to do with the union.

The unnatural way girls were brought up necessitated on their parts much repression, and because of this repression they were deemed to be more gentle than boys and more tender-hearted. Whether women are more gentle than men is doubtful, but perhaps they are more averse than men to conflict. This dislike to open conflict, coupled with the repression imposed upon them, led to their seeking the accomplishment of their ends by less open means than are resorted to by men. What they were not allowed to strive for in open competition they worked for in secret, learning to hide disappointment and suffering under a mask of smiles or a perfectly impassive countenance.

Deprived of healthy exercise, and driven by

custom and training to believe that they were unfit for business and incapable of understanding public affairs, women had no outlet for their energies but in obtaining that mastery over men which women have never been slow to obtain and to exercise.

As the only hope of any measure of freedom for women lay in marriage, personal beauty and whatever tended to enhance it were prized by them beyond any other possessions. Desire for personal adornment became a passion, and whatever tended to rob the features of their beauty or the body of its grace was shunned at any cost, while quite temporary aids to beauty were used at fearful after cost of ugliness and premature decrepitude and decay.

Denied the opportunity of working out their own life and character in the arena of life, women devoted themselves to those appearances which won applause from men. They became mere lures. They assumed a fragileness they did not suffer from and gave their attention almost entirely to dress and personal adornment. The exclusion of women from public life and business made them unreasonable, and the more unreasonable they became the less they were consulted and the more they were enslaved.

Of all the forms of bondage that women have suffered from, perhaps the bondage of dress has been the most persistent, relentless, and oppressive.

Any departure from the dictates of fashion was visited with the charge of eccentricity, or with the still more terrible charge of boldness and lack of womanliness. A man glories in being considered bold, but a woman shrinks from the charge of boldness as degrading to her sex. The word, indeed, has even a meaning when applied to women that it does not possess when applied to men.

The bravest men who ever lived would soon be rendered powerless if dressed in clinging, trailing, tight-fitting garments which never for a moment left the body free to move on natural lines. Women are the victims of clothes, and some of them recognize the fact and strive for freedom, but freedom from the slavery of clothes can only be obtained as women pass into those phases of active life which have modified men's clothes slowly through the centuries. The woman doctor, for instance, will not continue to wear trailing skirts, flowing ribbons, and all sorts of beads, feathers, laces, and loose odds and ends. She will gradually dress in ways that will not interfere with her professional duties. She will learn not to glitter, or dazzle, or rustle. This is just what has happened in the case of men, who at first probably dressed as women dressed, merely for warmth and comfort. Women's clothes are not only a cause of her bondage, but a sign of its ancient origin. Reform in women's dress is

impossible until women themselves determine to take part in the work and pastimes of men. Necessity, not fashion, will modify women's dress. When women play at football and cricket, and when they shoot, row, jump, run, box, wrestle, and fence as men do these things, then their dress will be modified and they will escape from the depressing tyranny of clothes.

Women often pride themselves on their willingness to obey, but they are not obedient. They submit, it is true, but they are rebels at heart, as all slaves are rebels, and what they call obedience is only grudging submission. One great hindrance in the way of women's emancipation is the spirit of insubordination that breaks out among them from time to time. Men are taught obedience from their earliest years. They have to work under command. They have to obey the laws which govern the materials they work with. They have, in short, to be obedient as women are rarely obedient. It is well known by those who employ women that they are never as well in hand as men are. Men are more difficult to deal with when they resolve to protest, but women, so to speak, are always protesting. They do not accept their position, whatever it may be, as completely as men accept their position.

It is often charged against women that they are not thorough. Thoroughness is a result of training and experience, and women, through no fault of

their own, have not had training and experience long enough and complete enough to be thorough. Men only become thorough by early initiation into business and affairs, and by being forced at the cost of life itself, to walk in line with their fellows to declared goals. Men are slain unmercifully at every stage of their existence in the demand for thoroughness, and it is, therefore, not wonderful that in the end they become more thorough than women. Every trade and calling in which men are engaged has its yearly tale of slain, who were unable to bear the burden that was laid upon them. When women are emancipated they too will be slaughtered in the mines, forges, factories, and workshops of the world, but until that time comes they will seem to be the inferiors of men, although they are not really inferior. The difference is that the weak among males are killed while the weak among females survive and breed.

Owing to the subordinate position of women they are less truthful than men. They work up to their ends without the exercise of force and must therefore use guile. Men lie as readily as women when they think lies will serve their purpose, but having more freedom and being less afraid of conflict they have less cause to lie. Women are taught to lie from their childhood in order to hide their desires, their disappointments, and their sufferings. Women are driven in upon

themselves and in sheer self-defence lie as men are not called upon to lie.

Lying is almost always more a matter of physical cowardice and mental fear than of morals. In rural districts untruthfulness is more common than in cities, because inquisitiveness is greater in the country than in towns. Just so with men and women. Men are not afraid, and do not lie in reference to those things where fear does not come in. Women are afraid, and have good cause to be afraid, and rather than the truth should be known they resort to untruthfulness as their only defence against prying curiosity and malicious intention.

The assumed inferiority of women rests on very poor foundations. It may be true that a thousand women weigh less than a thousand men, or can lift a less weight, or bear a less burden, or measure fewer inches, but all this is due to the same causes which reduce the number of men in every generation far below the number of women, although more boys are born than girls. The sexes are born in almost equal numbers and probably of equal strength, but the training boys are subjected to kills the weak and develops the strong, while the training girls are subjected to favours the weak and places disabilities upon the strong. A strong woman bodily and mentally is too often treated as a being to be afraid of and to shun, but strong men are universally admired.

CHAPTER III.

PERFECT LEGAL EQUALITY.

The demand of women for perfect equality before the law means far more than some of those realize who make the demand. It means, for instance, the ultimate abolition of all those privileges, exemptions and preferences now enjoyed by women. That women do possess many privileges, exemptions, and preferences will not be denied, nor will it be denied that there are many women who prefer the deference of men, and all that it brings and entails, to their own freedom. These contented slaves see clearly that the emancipation of women would mean the utter loss to them of all they really value. Now they are the pets of men and have power over them which they exercise with cruel and despotic arbitrariness. These women do not wish to compete with men in colleges or parliaments, in offices or counting houses. They would not, of course, object to being invested with the political franchise, or with any other privilege that would enable them to exercise

more power over men, but they have no intention or desire to enter into stern, relentless, equal strife with men in all the departments of life. They agree, in their casual touch-and-go manner, that women ought to be the equals of men before the law, but they are not prepared to make themselves disagreeable to others, or uncomfortable to themselves, by insisting upon reform.

There is another and larger section of women who know very little about their legal rights and wrongs. They work for low wages and accept hardship and cruelty as the will of God for them. When some more than usually brutal act of injustice is done to them, and they seek redress in the law courts ; or when misfortune comes heavily upon them, and they are thrown upon their own slender resources, they discover that they are handicapped at every turn by law and custom. These women are not the pets of men. They are the rank and file upon whom the burdens of the world fall with crushing force. A few of these become ardent reformers, but they are a small band and are often so embittered by their own sad experiences that they cannot be induced to deal with more than the particular form of injustice that has touched them.

There is a third section of women who neither belong to the idlers who revel in their slavery, nor to the oppressed workers and victims of men. These advocates of perfect equality for women are

comparatively few in number. They have looked at the position of women in all its bearings, and are prepared for all the consequences of emancipation. They realize that legal equality before the law is one thing, and that actual equality in every department of human activity is another and very different thing, and much harder to achieve.

Legal equality, however, means more than is generally supposed, and entails far greater changes than men are willing to make, or than most women have courage to claim. When women are politically enfranchised and not only vote for Members of Parliament, but can themselves be members of parliaments and governments, they will quickly remove all those inequalities in the law which press unfairly against women, and will make short work of those barriers with which the learned professions have been hedged about to prevent the intrusion of women. The Church of England will probably be the last to concede to women their claim of perfect legal equality, but even the Church of England will not always be able to insist that women, simply because they are women, shall be kept out of the ministry and government of the Church.

If a woman can preach, and it is well-known that women can preach, on what principle of equity or justice will the Church of England continue to exclude her from Church pulpits? If a woman understands the law, and there are women learned

in the law, according to what rule of common sense shall she be disqualified from giving legal advice and pleading the case of her client in courts of justice. If a woman is more fit to be a Bishop, or a Judge, or a Prime Minister, or a General, or a Magistrate, or an Admiral, on what principle shall she be excluded while the position is given to a man less qualified?

Women have already almost won the right to be educated as thoroughly as men are educated, and have shown that even the senior wrangler may be beaten by a woman! In the medical profession women have got a firm footing, and nobody who was quite sane would refuse to consult a woman doctor simply because she was a woman.

Women are not yet qualified in large numbers for the highest positions filled by men, but every year larger numbers of girls are being thoroughly trained in schools, colleges, and universities, and are exceeding all that their male competitors have ever done in the field of learning. Fully equipped women are beginning to knock at the doors of the professions for admission, and sooner or later every legal obstacle will have to be removed from the path of women, and they will be made free to do whatever they are qualified to do.

The people who maintain the wisdom of retaining laws which disqualify women from holding certain positions and exercising certain privileges do so on the ground that women are unfit to discharge the

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privileges and unable to hold the positions. If women are unable to compete with men, why should laws be retained which prohibit them from doing what it is contended they cannot do? Surely natural inability is a sufficient bar without legal prohibition.

When women have obtained perfect legal equality and begin to exercise their rights and privileges as men exercise them, a struggle will certainly begin, which for fierceness and bitterness will far exceed the present conflict for legal recognition. At present men are contemptuously tolerant towards women who are fighting their way up, but even now in some departments of labour there are signs of discontent amongst men at the growing competition of women. As the competition becomes severer men will drop their half contemptuous attitude and will bring all their organized forces to bear against women.

It will be in this struggle, and probably in its industrial phases, that men and women workers will first come into close conflict where no quarter will be allowed and the weak will have to go to the wall. One of the penalties of equality is—equality. There will be no concessions for women when they have made it understood that they are in earnest and really mean to compete with men in the industrial world.

Women do not yet know how terrible is the strife amongst men for daily bread. Many men

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do not know. The labourer toils at his post and is expected to do as much work as the labourer with whom he is mated. It is blow for blow, spadeful for spadeful, burden for burden, and there is no pity and no remission. The unfit are driven out, and often literally drop exhausted and dying at their task. This is the school in which men are trained, and there is little variation in the methods of the strife however widely the work itself may differ. There is a minimum of excellence, or speed, or strength, or steadiness which must be attained, and those who cannot attain to that minimum are run down, cut off, or cast out almost as by a natural process. Boys are put to occupations as soon as they are past school age, and thousands upon thousands of them succumb to the hardships of their labour before they reach manhood. When girls are sent into manufactories, they, too, will succumb, as many of them succumb now in those parts of the country where women are engaged in manufacturing industries.

Girls enter into the conflict with boys at a disadvantage. Boys, owing to their training, are stronger than girls. A strong girl is not, of course, weaker than a puny boy, but generations of work and hardship have given advantages to boys which girls can only obtain by generations of similar toil and hardship. Whether mere sex counts for anything against women on the point of strength can only be tested by a long and

equal struggle in which no quarter is given or taken on either side. That women should fail in their first efforts to compete with men in physical labour will prove nothing except their want of training and the presence amongst them of a feeble class which generation after generation is remorselessly weeded out from amongst men.

Women are not organized, and do not seem to have the power of men to organize. This, again is due to the traditions and training of men, who from their earliest years are taught to act together and to obey leaders. Women will not obey leaders. Men never raise questions as to their individual dignity, but obey implicitly the person put in authority. This is just what women at present are not able to do. This inability to work in unison is not a matter of sex, but of training and tradition. Men follow the leader who can lead. Women are bound by all sorts of side issues which need not be enumerated, but are well known to exist. For instance, women would not allow one of their sex to lead them in the franchise movement who held heterodox views on the sexual relations, or who did not believe in a personal God. Men would accept as leader any man who had proved his power to lead whatever his views were on religion or marriage.

Up to the present time women have been one mass, loosely spoken of as rich and poor, learned and ignorant, idlers and workers, but without

those sharper lines of division which trades, professions, and other pursuits give to men. Men act through their trade societies for one set of ends; through their friendly societies for another set; through their different professions, clubs, and organizations for other sets. Women are almost without organizations. Men are army men, or navy men, or volunteers, or militiamen, or masons, or oddfellows, or foresters. Women are just women, and those who have stepped out of the limits of sex are still so few as not to form a class. Boys unconsciously begin the work of organization at school, and are of Eton, or Harrow, or Rugby, or Westminster. Girls have, as yet, no traditions, no history, no societies, no clubs, and when they become women are as difficult to organize as birds or flies. The girl who wins fame at a college marries and cannot be traced. A man is never lost in this way.

There are indications in many directions that women realize the difficulty of organization. Let them not make the mistake of thinking that they cannot organize simply because they are women. Men can organize because they are broken up into small workable sections, while women for the most part remain in the mass. Sex has nothing to do with the matter, and that is the only point it is necessary to make here.

CHAPTER IV.

TWO STANDARDS OF PURITY.

The peculiar relations women hold towards men are illustrated in no department of life more vividly than in their sexual relations, and in the two standards of purity set up, one for women and another and lower one for men. Notwithstanding the higher standard of purity they are expected to reach in sexual matters, women fall below men in their moral views of marriage, and of what is due to themselves in self respect. This is just what might be expected to arise out of the enslaved condition of women, whose in-driven sense of subordination and inferiority tends to destroy the moral sense.

Men seldom think, much less talk or write, honestly about women, who are secretly held to be fair game to be hunted down. Of course each man's wife, mother, sisters, and daughters are to be held sacred and are not to be looked at sexually, but the wives, mothers, sisters and

daughters of other men are not sacred, and there is, therefore, an air of insincerity about all that is said and written by men in reference to women and the sexual relations. The object here is not, however, to describe or to discuss those relations, but to see how they affect women and to discover what views men hold in reference to them.

An unchaste woman is an outcast, and a woman who was not chaste would keep that secret more closely than any other. An unchaste man is not an outcast, and a confession of unchastity would not lower him much, if at all, in the eyes of his fellows, nor it must be confessed, in the eyes of most women. If, in a company of men, the question of chastity cropped up and one of those present alleged that he was chaste, his avowal would probably be received with jeering laughter, and, if believed, he would be looked upon as a fool for making what would be considered to be a humiliating confession. It is doubtful whether any man would venture in an ordinary gathering of men to contend either for his own chastity or for the chastity of men generally. Men do not believe in one another's chastity.

Women are probably more ignorant of the lives lived by men than at first sight seems credible but most women know at least that men are not the saints women are expected to be, and understand what is meant by the "sowing of wild

oats," "living a fast life," "being mixed up with some women," and similar expressions.

Men who have given way to habits of insobriety, and who make no pretence of having lived moral lives, expect to marry women of spotless virtue and unblemished morals. They never think of marrying women who get drunk occasionally, or who have bastard children, or who are known to be unchaste or profane. They will not, as a rule, even marry the women they themselves have debauched under solemn promises of marriage !

A woman, on the other hand, who refused to marry a man because he had once been drunk, or because he was not chaste, or because he was profane, or even because he had at some time of his life kept a mistress, would be looked upon as too particular for this imperfect world, and most likely women themselves would say very severe things about one of their sex who objected to marry a man on the ground that he had once in his life been drunk, and yet what man would marry a woman if he knew she had once been drunk ?

A woman who is unchaste is said to be "fallen." She is driven from society and is branded as unworthy. A man who is unchaste is not said to be "fallen." He retains his place in society and loses scarcely anything in respectability or position. He is deemed to be still fit to mate with the purest and most innocent of women, while the

victims of his own lust are scouted and treated with loathing by the woman who has taken their place under the shield of the law and by the name of wife.

How completely law and custom obscure and pervert moral vision is obvious in the dishonour and shame which fall upon women for an act which brings but little disgrace and discredit upon men. The "fallen" man still walks with head erect in public places, while his companion, the "fallen" woman, is called a prostitute and is deemed to be unfit to hold converse with her more continent sisters, and is even cast out by the very men who hunted her down. The unchaste man is not even conscious of moral taint. He is very careful what sort of woman he marries and thinks he has done all that the most exacting can require when he makes pecuniary provision for his mistress and abandons his former loose life. He "settles down," as he calls it, and is not much troubled about his victims, who are branded as outcasts by law and custom, and who dare not approach him, an honoured and honourable member of society!

That the same act should bring shame to women and leave men practically untouched, reveals a condition of things in society which ought to make further demands for the emancipation of women unnecessary. But there are thousands of women, to say nothing of men, who will contend that

immorality in men is not as reprehensible as immorality in women, because the consequences to men's property are more serious when women violate the marriage vow than when men violate it. Women are far more urgent than men in contending that unchastity in men is of less moral consequence than unchastity in women.

Owing to the subordination of women, they are less moral than men in everything pertaining to marriage, although a higher standard of purity is required from them than is required from men. With women, for instance, marriage is too often simply a matter of business, and they marry men who are positively repugnant to them, and for whom they do not even profess to have respect or affection. Men, as a rule, choose their wives, and at the outset begin married life with something like love. Women, too often, take the men who are socially fit, and abstain from careful scrutiny into their husbands' lives, simply because marriage with them is a business, and its duties, responsibilities, and obligations are frequently accepted because there is no alternative for them, in the present state of law and custom, but starvation or prostitution.

It is not only in sexual matters that men claim and exercise a freedom and licence not accorded to women. Men use profane language, tell filthy stories, smoke, play cards, drink in hotels and public houses, and in all sorts of directions behave

in ways which would stamp women who did these things as unfit for decent society. Men are the lawmakers, and women are not in a position to demand from them pure acts, clean language, and decent behaviour. In the presence of ladies there is great care not to be offensive, but what would men say if women drank and swore and indulged in all kinds of ribald talk, except in the presence of gentlemen !

Whatever may be said about the chastity and morals of men and women, there can be no question that there are two standards of purity, one for men and another and higher one for women. It is equally obvious that men are far more careful that the women they choose to be their wives are chaste, and moral, and well behaved, than women are careful that the men they accept to be their husbands are free from vice and immorality. Indeed, it may be said that only the purest of women is considered to be good enough for the vilest of men, while the vilest of men is considered to be good enough for the best and most innocent of women.

These distorted views of women's relations to men could not continue to prevail if women were the equals of men before the law. Legal equality would not, of course, make women less chaste, but would make men less abandoned in all sorts of ways. That women accept immoral men to be their husbands is not because women are naturally

less moral than men, but because women, owing to the disabilities placed upon them by law and custom, are often powerless to help themselves.

There should only be one standard of morality for men and women, but as long as there are two standards of freedom, two standards of justice, and two standards of equality before the law, there will also be two standards of purity and morality.

CHAPTER V.

THE SPHERE OF WOMEN.

Much has been said and written about the sphere of women, but what that sphere is nobody can possibly know until women are free as men are free, and are the perfect equals of men before the law. For many years it was taken for granted that politics, at any rate, were not women's sphere, but Primrose Leagues and Women's Liberal Associations have destroyed that ancient tradition, and although women are not yet allowed to vote for the election of Members of the House of Commons, or to sit in the Houses of Parliament, their services are eagerly sought by candidates, and they canvass and make speeches just as if it had never been a cherished article of man's political creed that politics would degrade women and destroy their womanliness.

Not very many years ago women who addressed meetings from platforms were said to have gone beyond their natural sphere, but in these days, nobody is shocked or surprized when women make speeches at public meetings. Speech making is now conceded to be quite within a woman's

sphere of action, and nobody would expect, because a woman could deliver a smart address, that she would therefore be less gentle, or less fit to be a wife or mother, than it would be expected that a man who could make a speech would be less manly or less fit to be a husband or father.

Mathematics, medicine, law, classics, and learned degrees were all formerly supposed to be quite out of women's sphere, but women have very recently proved that although handicapped in all sorts of ways, learning of all kinds is well within their sphere, and nobody now ventures to say that women, simply because they are women, are less able than men to attain to the highest positions in the scholastic world.

There are barriers in the old universities which still hinder the progress of women, but those barriers will have to be removed, and women in the near future will meet men on equal terms in the ancient seats of learning and take the honours they win in free and open competitions.

In the times when brute force ruled the world men went so far in limiting the sphere of women that they were not even allowed to be the guardians of their own children, and yet it has never been contended even by the most ignorant advocates of a limited and legally defined sphere for women that bearing children was a usurpation and not the natural sphere of those women who bore the children.

The sphere of men is whatever they can do, and they are perfectly free to choose. When they make mistakes they fail, or die, or go mad, or abandon their first choice and make a second. When a man fails in life his failure is not attributed to his having undertaken that which lies outside the sphere of men's work, but to his having undertaken labour for which he is personally unfitted. There is no such thing as a sphere for men, but there are departments of work which certain men never enter because they are unfit. It is equally true that there is no such thing as a sphere for women, and the same rule must apply to women as to men. They must be free to do whatever they are able to do. There are natural limitations of sex, strength, powers, &c., but when women have been emancipated all merely conventional barriers, restrictions, and limitations, and all legal disabilities and prohibitions, will disappear. Then the women who would like to teach will teach; the women who would like to make furniture will make furniture; the women who would like to cultivate the ground will cultivate the ground; the women who would like to plead in courts, or speak from platforms, or preach from pulpits, or write at desks, or dig in mines, or plough in fields, will do these things if they can do them as well as men can do them and under the same conditions.

The great idea at present is that women should

marry, bear children, and keep house. The fact is ignored that already there are hundreds of thousands of working women in mills, factories, shops, and domestic service, and that owing to the legal disabilities under which they live it is impossible for these women workers to secure the advantages which men, who are the law makers, have secured for themselves. Men have even limited women's freedom to work. There are hundreds of thousands of women who never marry, never bear children, and never have an opportunity of keeping house. Again, one of the most general causes of that hopeless poverty which exists in the country, is the helplessness of women who do marry and bear children, and are left by the death of their husbands with young families which they cannot support. If girls were educated as boys are educated, and were provided with businesses as men are provided with businesses, they might marry without fear of destitution haunting them in case of the death of their husbands.

Ignorance may presume that the sphere of women is wifehood and motherhood. But ignorance is not prepared to say how all the women are to be provided with husbands and children and homes. Ignorance does not even say on what ground wives and mothers should be less free than husbands and fathers, or than women who are not married. When once the subject of women's sphere is examined it is seen that there are no distinct

spheres for the sexes, and that women have been driven by unjust and oppressive legal enactments into narrow fields of action, under the pretence that they were unable to cope with men on equal terms.

If women are naturally weaker and more foolish than men, and if they are sure to be beaten by men in any field where there is no favour shown to them, why should the law be called to the support of men against women? Women bear children and suckle them. Women are not afraid that men will bear children, and do not desire that a law should be passed to prevent men from usurping women in this function. Where nature has set bounds human law need not interfere. Women are willing to obey natural limitations, but they are not willing to have their right of action restricted by legal enactments made by men in Parliaments where women have no voice. The sphere of woman is limited by what she can do, and she must insist that every barrier erected by law, custom, or prejudice to limit her sphere of action shall be completely removed, and that she shall be as free to act as man is free.

It will never, of course, be the sphere of weak little women to do the work of big strong men; but then it has never been recognised to be the sphere of weak little men to do the work of men who are big and strong. In vocations where courage is wanted surely women who possess courage will be in their sphere in following those vocations.

A timid man, even if he weighed twenty stone and could lift five hundred-weight, would be less in his sphere where courage was required than a brave little woman of only seven stone and under five feet in height. Men are not always measured by their height and weight, and women are not to be measured in those ways either. What is true of courage is equally true of insight, discretion, deftness, wisdom, punctuality, and other physical, mental, and spiritual qualities.

It is not contended that the powers, qualities and endowments of men and women are identical. Such a contention would be foolish. Three things are held. First, that where nature has disqualified women men need not enact a law, and that where nature has not disqualified them men's prohibitive law is an injustice and an impertinence. Second, that men have no right to coerce women for what men deem to be the good of women, as women have an equal right to freedom with men, and their sphere of action ought not to be limited to suit the convenience of men : women must judge of their own good. Third, that it is only in a state of perfect freedom and equality that the natural differences between men and women, if there are any, can be discovered. What is there unreasonable in these three contentions ?

CHAPTER VI.

WOMEN AND RELIGION.

Just as the slaves of the United States of America had a grievance against the Christian religion, as far as slavery was upheld by quotations from the Scriptures, so women have a grievance against the Christian religion as far as the Scriptures are quoted against the perfect equality of women with men.

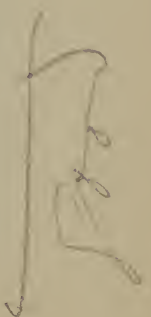
The Mosaic story of the creation starts with a bias against woman, who it is said was made late to be a helpmeet to man. Innocent man, we are told, was subsequently lured to his fall by woman, and she is represented as having brought a curse upon the earth which is supposed still to exist. From Moses to Paul is a wide jump, but Paul confirms the subjection of women. They have no friend in him, for he forged many of the chains they still wear. The friend of women was Jesus Christ, and it is for women to revolt against Mosaic and Pauline religion and insist upon the religion of Jesus. He never said hard and unjust

things about women, and always treated them with as much reverence and respect as he paid to men. Women repaid him with love, and were his friends and helpers in all his sorrows and troubles down to the very last. He saw that even when a woman had sinned it was the men who accused her who were the real culprits. The world waits, and women especially wait, for the substitution of the religion of Christ for the religion of Paul. Women have suffered many centuries of injustice and oppression because of the writings of Moses and Paul, and whenever women seriously determine to be free they will find their last and strongest enemies entrenched behind religious barricades, and pleading the Pentateuch and the Epistles of Paul in support of their position as determined opponents of justice to women.

General Booth has done justice to women in the religious system of the Salvation Army, and in some measure other Nonconformist bodies have relaxed the Pauline decree of silence imposed upon women, but the Roman Catholic Church and the Church of England, while allowing women to engage in certain forms of work, keep them rigorously out of the priesthood—out of the pulpits. Put broadly, the subjection of women is complete in the Church of Rome and the Church of England, and the struggle for equality will be bitterest and most relentless when women claim to be preachers, priests, bishops, cardinals and popes.

How absurd the suggestion will appear to many that a woman should occupy the position of Pope! If there had never been a Queen of England and an Empress of India it would appear equally absurd that a woman should occupy those positions. The whole system of exclusiveness must go, and all the evil that words supposed to have been inspired by God have brought upon women must also go. God is not the foe of women, and she was not created to be the servant of man and to submit to his rule, however oppressive and unjust, in silence.

Women are said to have been greatly benefited by the Christian Religion. They have fared better in Christian countries just as beasts of burden and other animals have fared better, if they have fared better. The Christian religion exists in Italy and Spain, where cruelty to animals is too horrible to dwell upon, and in America until quite recently both men and women were held in slavery, and even to this day the Christian religion does not enable a white citizen of America to look at a black citizen of America as his equal! It is very easy to claim too much for the Christian religion. There can be no question, however, that in this country, at any rate, in some sections of society, women have not had to bear the full weight of their subordination, but even to-day, after nineteen centuries of Christian religious teaching, it is safer to kick a woman into a shapeless mass than



to shoot a pheasant or to poach a salmon. Has the Christian religion protected hares and salmon?

Religion has afforded women in every age an outlet for their devotion and enthusiasm. The history of religion, indeed, is one long record of their services, sacrifices, and adoration. They served, as they thought, at the bidding of God and asked for no recognition and no reward but greater service and more complete sacrifice.

At last women are beginning to ask Religion through the churches for justice. Much has been heard of chivalrous regard for women; love for women; respect for women; consideration for women; deference towards woman; but now they themselves demand justice for women, and they naturally look towards the churches for help, for it was in them their hope lay. Not much has been heard about justice for women, and yet justice is a good, useful, wearable commodity.

Will the churches approve of the demand made by women for justice, or will they disapprove? It is to be feared that they will fall back on Moses and on Paul and will refuse the plea for justice as contrary to the will of God! Ah, how much wrong has been done in the world under the plea that it was the will of God.

And what will women do? For a long time they will refuse to believe that the religion in which they have trusted is opposed to their just claims, but at last they will see that it is not the

religion of Christ, but the rule of the Churches, that is opposed to them, and then they will rise in revolt against the Churches and will press forward their claims, stung by even keener sense of intolerable wrong than is now felt.

Men have already revolted against organized religion, owing to the refusal of the churches to accept life as it is. Working women in large towns, who are far too seldom taken fully into account in discussions of this kind, have hitherto had little to do with the churches. It has been the comfortable, fairly educated, middle-class women of the country, who could not find in existing social and political conditions any measure of satisfaction and fulness for their stunted and impoverished natures, who have clung to religion as their only hope and stay. Denied justice on earth, they turned with wrapt devotion to heaven, but when they discover that their spiritual guides in whom they trusted are the last to surrender power and privilege, they will revolt, not from the Christian religion, and certainly not from the Founder of that religion, but from the churches and ecclesiastical organizations which have rendered the emancipation of women far more difficult than ever it was rendered by parliaments, governments, and social systems.

What form the revolt of women against the churches will take is of less consequence than the fact that women, who have looked to religion for

consolation and strength, are being slowly driven to recognize that the last strongholds of injustice and unfairness they will have to contend against will be the churches.

Poor women work in mills and factories, or in service of one kind and another, and are not much troubled about their political wrongs and disabilities. They attend Nonconformist chapels, as a rule, and take religion, politics, and social conditions, as they take the seasons and the weather, as part of the arrangements of Providence. Sometimes they wonder why men are better paid than themselves for the same kind of work, and occasionally they ask how it happens that they are not the equals of the savage brutes with whom they have been unfortunately connected by marriage, but they do not venture to demand equal rights and privileges with men, and so the subjection of women goes on from generation to generation.

Working men, and men in the middle classes, have not only handicrafts and professions, but are in full possession of all the rights and privileges of citizenship. They have careers before them from their earliest years, and in many very real senses the highest positions in the State are open to the poorest of men. Even the wastrels and failures have the army and navy open to them, while the well-born and well-educated may aspire to guide the councils of the nation.

Middle-class women have neither work, nor careers, nor political rights and privileges. Here and there a more than usually strong woman of the middle classes forces her way through the conventional barriers into active life, but this breaking of bounds means loss and suffering, as the breaking of bounds has always meant loss and suffering. When the position of middle-class women is examined it is not matter for wonder that the demand for freedom should have arisen amongst them and not amongst the poor women, who seem to work harder and to suffer more than their sisters higher in the social scale.

Even marriage is less general in the middle classes than amongst the poor and the rich. A working woman can, as a rule, obtain a husband if she wants one, and the women of the aristocracy are not condemned to celibacy. But in the middle classes there are thousands of women to whom marriage is impossible, simply because it is in their ranks that the women are found to exceed the men in number. There are other reasons why middle-class women do not marry, but this is not the place to enter into that inquiry however interesting it might be.

What it is desired to make plain is the fact that poor women find work and husbands; that poor men and middle-class men have work and careers and possess political rights and privileges, while middle-class women are denied work, cannot

marry, have no careers, and are without political rights and privileges. It is not surprising that these women have fallen back upon religion for consolation, and now they are being slowly and reluctantly convinced that the churches where their hope lay will be their most relentless foes in the strife for justice and equality before the law.



CHAPTER VII

THE LOSS AND GAIN OF CHANGE.

Already much has been done in this country to lift woman from the degradation into which unjust law and brutal custom had forced her. In these days she is, perhaps, deemed to be less an angel, but more a woman; less a toy, but more a citizen; less a pet, but more a companion. The attitude of men towards her is more reasonable, although still inclined to be contemptuous and patronizing. When not beautiful she is not now cast aside as utterly useless, but is allowed, grudgingly, to have a right to live if she can live without interfering with the rights and privileges of men, and without making demands upon them.

Hitherto the changes wrought in the condition of women have mainly been in the direction of lifting from her bent shoulders ancient burdens of superstition, prejudice, and suspicion. She is not by any means free from the old wrong, and cannot yet stand erect; but as Olive Schreiner, the

clear-sighted, high-priestess of women's emancipation, says in one of her inspired writings, "he who stands by the side of women cannot help her: *she must help herself*. Let her struggle till she is strong." Not in a day or a year, nor yet by one act of justice, can woman be emancipated and made strong to help herself. Man, the oppressor, must not be impatient when he has lifted the galling burden and has removed the ancient bonds that prevented free action, if woman does not at once leap to her feet, strong and equal, but still remains prone and unconscious of her power.

Subjection has more than physical effects, and all subjection is not intentionally cruel. A child carried by nurses and shielded from independent action out of purest love would be just as helpless when fully grown as the child that was refused the use of its limbs by blackest hate and malignity.

Men have ceased consciously to oppress women, and have lifted the burdens from them which they recognize as burdens. The completion of the work will have to be done by women themselves. Men have changed their attitude towards woman, but are not prepared to receive her as an equal until she has proved her fitness by her own acts and achievements. Future changes will have to be wrested from men by women in equal conflict, and only those rights and privileges will be theirs which they can win and hold as men win and

hold their rights and privileges, by virtue of strength, skill, endurance, courage, patience, insight, and, above all, by strict discipline and complete obedience.

The question is frequently asked, what will be the loss and gain of all the changes which are involved in the full emancipation of woman. A complete answer to this question is impossible, and from the reformer's stand-point is of little or no importance. Man will lose a slave, and woman a protector. The fact is not generally recognized, that it is for the difficult, dangerous, and unpleasant places in life that women are striving. They are demanding to take upon themselves risks and duties which slay nearly a million more men than women in the lifetime of every generation.

The right to vote at Parliamentary elections, or even to sit as representatives of the people in the House of Commons, is not all that is included in the equality of the sexes. Equality means that women will take their stand with men wherever danger, suffering, and death are to be found. They will be mown down on battle fields as men are mown down; they will be swept into trench-like graves by explosion and fire-damp as men are swept, and it will cease to be thought more terrible to slay women than men, because the slaughter of women will be as common as the slaughter of men.

Women are more delicately fashioned than men,

because they have not been tested and weeded out as men have been tested and weeded out, but women are not more beautiful or less grandly formed than men, and when women are men's equals it will not seem strange that they should be maimed or slain in battle or elsewhere. But, it may be asked, will it be necessary that women should be soldiers, and miners, and sailors, and workers in quarries and forges when they are made the equals of men before the law? It will be necessary that they should, as a sex, take a full share of the risks, hardships, and dangers of life as well as of the responsibilities, powers, and privileges. There will always be women, as there are always men, who will not join the army, but if all women were either refused admission to the army, or declined military service, they could not be the equals of men. The same is true of all other dangerous occupations. When restrictions and disabilities are removed, if it is found that women leave the hard and dangerous tasks to men they will sooner or later sink back into some form of slavery. Those rule who risk. Whether women will retain their physical beauty in a state of freedom and equality is another question that may be best and most easily answered by looking at the women who now work in mills and factories, and who are amongst the handsomest women of the country. For lithe grace and suppleness they have gained in the struggle whatever may be the

death penalty that has had to be paid by those who went under in the strife.

In discussions in reference to equality between the sexes, the opponents of freedom seem to imagine that freedom and equality will necessarily entail upon all women military service or work in mines and quarries. Nothing of the sort. There are millions of men who never become soldiers, or sailors, or miners, or quarrymen. Men go to those avocations for which they are fit, or for which they have a preference. This is all that women demand, namely, that they shall be completely free to do whatever they are able to do, even to serving in the army, or navy, or to working in quarries, mines, and forges.

There are thousands upon thousands of small, feeble, men who can neither work nor fight. Nobody expects them to manifest courage which they do not possess, or to exercise force which they never inherited. They are mere males, but they neither guide moral forces nor contend with physical forces. They are the small male residuum that is always passing out of existence, it is to be hoped.

On the other hand there are thousands upon thousands of noble women—noble in body, mind and spirit, fit to conquer and to control nations. They are now held down by brutal law and still more brutal custom. If they were emancipated they would take their places with the men to

whom they are equal, and the best of them are equal to the best of men, as the best of men most readily admit.

When women are emancipated the number of these capable women will increase every day, and in every walk of life feeble, purposeless men will have to give place to vigorous, forceful women. This will not entail loss but gain.

In almost every family there is at least one woman of insight, courage, and power, who has to bow to the weak male members of the house, simply because they are males, and are trained, and she is a woman to whom training has been denied, and to whom skilled action is therefore impossible. When toil is considered to be as inevitable for women as for men, and when it is as reasonable to give wealthy women professions or occupations as it is to give professions or occupations to wealthy men, then the strong women will rule and will have other attractions than mere prettiness, and other rivalries than dress, intrigues, and the tittle tattle of society, whether the society be high or low.

The loss and gain of change, who shall measure them? Justice must be done whatever befalls. Besides, until women are emancipated nobody can discover whether women are men's equals or not. There will be loss to women of ease and of much tenderness, There will be loss to men of much clinging softness and helplessness. The

struggle that freedom entails is long and pitiless, and those who are not fit go down and are lost. The gain will not always be an individual gain, but just as George Eliot represents that acquaintance with death brought earnestness into life, so freedom will bring purpose and nobleness to women.

Women will be ennobled by freedom, although they may be long in making good and wise use of it. Besides, whatever may be the loss and gain of change, the change is inevitable. Women are determined to be as free as law can make them. All the forces tend that way. Already they have broken the rigid lines of custom, and are, as Olive Schreiner says of the women in the desert, "staggering to their knees with strange light in their eyes." They are walking to the Land of Freedom, "down the banks of Labour, through the water of Suffering," and there is no bridge, nor will there be any bridge, until, as she says, they have made one with their own bodies. Then over that bridge so made shall pass the entire human race *

* Dreams, by Olive Schreiner, London. T. Fisher Unwin, Paternoster Square.

CHAPTER VIII.

WHEN THE CHANGE IS COMPLETE.

When the change is complete and women stand before the law the equals of men and subject to no exemptions, prohibitions, or disabilities whatever, but are free to do whatever they are able to do in every walk of life, then will the real differences between men and women begin to appear, if there are any such differences between them. Then, too, will the existing differences which have been fostered by unequal laws and by the unnatural life of women begin to disappear. Freedom will give confidence and the exercise of freedom will give strength.

When the gyves have been removed, and when to be a woman is no longer to belong to an inferior caste, then the natural passions, powers, tendencies, and longings of women will find free outlet and scope. Then whatever is unwomanly will be unmanly also, and whatever is manly will also be womanly. The strong will still continue

to help the weak, but strong women will not be ashamed of their strength, and will cease to pretend to accept help from decrepid men. They will render help where they are able to render it, and will be proud of their strength as men are proud of it.

When the change is complete will it be discovered that there are actual differences between the sexes, and that there is a sexual base for some of those differences? Suppose it is found that men are more aggressive and urgent than women, and that women are less constantly and less immediately under sexual influences than men. If discoveries of this and other kinds are made when women are free it is not difficult to see that all the differences will not be to the advantage of men. If as a sex women are less combative and cooler than men, until roused by external causes of excitement, they may not as frequently be found in the field of battle or in the hunting field as men, but they may more frequently be found in those fields where heat is of less value than coolness, and where courage counts for more than passion.

If there are natural differences between men and women, and women do not for one moment say that there are no such differences, they will surely not all be in favour of men. Some of the differences may give so many points to women that when the average is struck it may leave the sexes pretty equal. If, however, freedom should demonstrate

that women are naturally the inferiors of men in so many ways that no points of superiority which they possess can raise them to an equality with men, there will be no alternative for them but to accept the position and make the best they can of their inferior physical and mental powers.

No true women object to natural differences between the sexes, but they do strongly object, and intend to object still more strongly, to the inequalities of the law which are almost all on the side of men, and are of such a nature that women cannot possibly develop their powers or make the best use of their abilities until those legal inequalities are abolished. Granting that there are natural differences between men and women, and that those natural differences are all in favour of men, there is no reason why those differences should be aggravated by unequal laws and by the still more unequal customs to which the laws give rise and sanction.

When the change is complete will not a fatal blow have been struck at family life? This question will be asked by many who are really anxious that women should be as free as it is possible for them to be free without disruption of the social system built up on family life as we know it in this country. No doubt one of the changes that will spring out of the freedom of women, will be greater regard for motherhood. Marriage will cease to be women's chief avocation, and

motherhood will grow in esteem when the bearing of children cannot be forced upon women, as it is now indirectly forced upon them, by their utter dependence upon men who are the wage-earners, and consequently the masters of those who have no alternative except starvation between marriage and prostitution.

Legally, man is at present the head of the family. When men and women are legal equals, and the woman is as capable a wage-earner as the man, the head of the family will be the one who is the better and stronger of the two. Under the present system the woman often rules, and it is a saying amongst women that a wife is not worthy of her position who cannot have all her own way and still persuade her husband that he rules with a sway that is absolute. It is in a higher tone of family life that the beneficial effects of the full emancipation of women will be first distinctly felt. It is in family life that the improved position of women is already felt. Now that a wife-mother has some legal right of guardianship over her children she is less suspicious and has less cause to brood and scheme. The change in the law that gave women absolute power over their own property and earnings, strengthened family life by increasing women's self-respect, and by making men realize that women are not absolutely without legal rights. The recent law that gives wives whose husbands die intestate all

the estate of their husbands of £500 or under, and when more, gives them a claim to £500 and their share of one-third in addition, has mitigated a rankling wrong that has long existed. The difficulty is to see why a wife should not succeed to all her husband's estate if he has not taken the trouble to make a will.

Every Act of Parliament that has removed disabilities from women has tended to strengthen family life, and every change in custom that has tended to minister to their self-respect has been a fresh bulwark to protect the sanctity of the family.

When the change is complete the family will have its King and its Queen, and the rule will be a joint rule. Respect will deepen into reverence, love will rise into devotion, and there will be no slaves and no superior persons in the family. The wife will rank with the husband, the sister will rank with the brother, and all will be equally free and equally noble.

When the change is complete there may be more suffering for those who have so long been held in subjection, but there will be more forbearance, more fellowship, more mutual regard, and incalculably more true family life. Not till then is true marriage or true parentage possible, except in those rare cases where exalted natures rise above law and custom and make a law for themselves.

CHAPTER IX.

HOW MEN ARE INTERESTED.

It is the fashion amongst men to treat what are called women's questions with a smile which is almost a sneer. If pushed into a corner, men will admit that there are serious problems of population, labour, marriage, divorce, and education which can never be understood, much less settled, without the consent and co-operation of women. They will also admit that women are not quite fairly treated under the laws and customs of this country, but they take the line of the old huntsman who, when pressed as to the cruelty of fox-hunting, confidently asserted that foxes enjoyed being hunted and took as much pleasure in the chase as the hounds and huntsmen themselves.

Men try to persuade themselves that women enjoy their position of inferiority and take pleasure in the sufferings which that inferior position entails upon them. Further, men say, it is no concern of ours. These women's questions do not affect

us, and we are not going to trouble ourselves about them. If women want to be free let them fight for freedom.

Here is the mistake. What are called women's questions do affect men even more than they affect women, and men cannot afford to maintain an attitude of supercilious indifference towards subjects which their mothers, wives, sisters, and daughters consider to be of vital importance. Everything that affects women concerns men.

As long as women received as gospel the tradition that men were their lords and masters, by the fiat of God Almighty, the way of men's life was not difficult, but now when women want to be supplied with reasons for every act of dominance on the part of men, and will not believe that God Almighty is their enemy, men's way is anything but pleasant, and far from easy. The shallow-minded father cannot now put off his daughter, who wants to know why she should not be sent to school and business as her brother is sent, by giving her a kiss and telling her, as he pats her on the head, that she is a girl and that girls "must do as girls do, you know." He is still more hopelessly at sea when his daughter afterwards refuses the husband he has provided, on the ground that she is not disposed to accept a master, and does not intend to lower herself by having children which she understands are not wanted in the country, and bring no credit to

those who bear them. She tells her father that she is certainly not going to be the drudge her mother has been, and that he is mistaken if he thinks the old order of things is still in force under which a man did just as he pleased, and the woman had neither will nor power of her own and no rights.

Men may sneer at the idea of women's subjection, and may ridicule her efforts for emancipation, but if men are wise they will not close their eyes to the incursion of women into departments of work which were formerly occupied solely by men. Women are discontented, and when women are discontented men will find it difficult to be comfortable and indifferent. Moreover, there is actual danger in the upheaval which is manifesting itself, and the insincere action of men who make pretence of sympathy which they do not feel adds to that danger by giving the discontent of women a tinge of bitterness. There is no danger that women will rise in open rebellion against the rule of men. There was no rebellion, or sign of rebellion, amongst the slaves of the Southern States against their masters, but there was a long and bloody war on their account nevertheless.

When half the population of a country awake to sense of oppression and injustice there is danger to the other half, however secure the other half may feel in its tested strength and in the submission of the oppressed. The discontent which

has seized women finds a lodging in every house in the land, and sooner or later will make men realize that they are interested in women's questions in ways they little dream of.

Women are dangerous either as slaves or tyrants, and until they are emancipated they will always be one or the other now that their eyes are opened. They hold in their own hands terrible power to avenge themselves for every slight and for every real or imagined wrong. When men have refused to do justice to women, and they will refuse to do them justice on the plea that women are not in earnest, then men will have their foes in their own households. Women will prove their sincerity in seeking freedom as they have proved their power in making oppression tolerable, and men will lose far more by the retention of oppression than women ever hoped to gain by freedom.

Men may laugh thoughtlessly at women's questions, and the bigger the fools the broader the grin, but the questions raised by the revolt of women are serious questions which affect men at home as well as in trade and politics. The wife says to her husband that the old bondage galls. The sister says to her brother that their life must be equal. The daughter says to her father that she cannot be put off by being told that she is only a girl. The mother says to her son that his sister is in no way his inferior. And yet men say that

women's questions do not affect them, and that they are not interested as to the way those questions are settled?

One of the great subjects that is agitating women is the immorality of men. How long can men refuse to be interested in this question? When women reach the point of treating openly immoral men as men treat openly immoral women, the interest of men in women's questions will very quickly pass out of the patronizing phase into the phase of fierce anger. When the leering, used-up libertine finds himself publicly scouted from society as the prostitutes he has made would be scouted from society, he will begin to think there is something more than a feeble joke in women's claim for freedom.

When the Bastardy Laws are reformed, and the man who has become the father of a child finds that he has lost control of his property and has contracted lasting and unavoidable obligations to both the woman and her offspring, he will begin to realize that women's questions are of absorbing interest and of the deepest concern to him.

As long as women only play at asking for freedom and justice men may profess lack of interest in women's questions. But when they are in earnest, when they move together in great, compact bodies, and make it clear that what is not conceded to justice will be seized by force, then men will find that they are interested in

everything that women claim in the name of justice.

But it may be said that women could not obtain justice by force. It is true that the army could put down women who resorted to force. But the army could also put down the outbreaks of men in towns who resist unjust laws, or who demand what they consider to be their rights. The army could put down the Welsh Nonconformists, who rightly or wrongly resist the payment of tithes. But the army does not shoot them down. Fresh Acts of Parliament are passed; the demands of the men in towns are conceded. When women are in earnest, and prove it by united action, they will not be shot down. Men do not believe that women are in earnest. Parliament does not believe they are in earnest, and consequently men treat women's claim for emancipation as a sort of fad which it is wise to humour, but which there is no obligation to treat seriously, at any rate for some time to come.

Men cannot refuse to be interested in a movement that seeks to do justice to at least half the inhabitants of the country. They are interested, and, what is more, they are uneasy. "What is to become of the country," they ask, "if women have votes for Members of Parliament. Why, women will all vote Tory and we shall be forced back a hundred years." How women would vote

it is hard to say, and is of little consequence, but there can be no doubt that the Members of Parliament they elected would be pledged to carry out certain reforms which have long been wanted. Besides, women would not all vote Tory, any more than men all vote Liberal. Women are divided amongst themselves, and for a long time only those women who feel an interest in politics would take the trouble to vote. If women had votes men who now profess indifference on women's questions would quickly change their attitude. It is not the direct influence on legislation that women would exercise by their votes that is of consequence, but the indirect influence which would be exercised when candidates and Members of Parliament knew that women possessed votes.

It used to be said that if labourers were enfranchised they would swamp every other interest. Labourers have votes. They do not swamp every other interest. They do not even appear to make any demands for themselves, but their indirect influence is seen in Allotment Acts, Free Elementary Education, Workmen's Dwelling Acts, and other measures which aim at removing grievances under which labourers are supposed to labour.

This is just what would happen if women had parliamentary votes. They would act on the legislature indirectly, and many of the inequalities under which they now labour would be quickly removed.

Whatever affects women must be interesting to men. All women's questions are in their deepest relations men's questions, and whether men like it or not they cannot avoid either the discussions or the strife involved in the movement which is gathering force every day all over the world for the full emancipation of women.



CHAPTER X.

CONCLUSION.

Whatever the future may hold of fuller life and freedom for women, the long past has unquestionably been filled with their moaning and with the pitiful sounds of their sorrowing. Age after age they have toiled with painful steps up the steep hills of time, carrying at their breasts children who were to grow up and smite them. What a record is theirs of love and hate; of pain and loss; of travail and endurance. They loom in the dawn of history! They are never absent from its records. What unconquerable strength has been allied with their apparent weakness. They have hovered about battle-fields. They have sat with pressed lips and wide-open eyes in beleagured cities. They have drunk deep of every horror that man has perpetrated from ancient times till now. They have passed down every possible avenue to all-embracing death. They have been swept away by

war and pestilence and famine. They have been familiar with crosses and scaffolds; with prisons and torture houses, and have been the victims of unutterable outrages. More than ever in the past they now hold their destinies in their own hands. They have proved their right to stand erect by men's side, his companions and equals, and they now ask him in the name of all they have endured for his sake and on his behalf for equality and justice.

THE END.

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